



News Release

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Ticks are waiting for you when you head outside to enjoy nice weather

Protect yourself, your family, and pets from diseases transmitted by ticks

OLYMPIA — Warmer sunny days beckon us to enjoy the great outdoors. So, what's bugging you? Ticks and other small biting creatures could be, so it's important to protect yourself, your family, and pets.

"Washington is home to ticks that can carry a variety of diseases," said Liz Dykstra, Ph.D., public health entomologist with the Zoonotic Disease Program. "We're asking people who have been bitten by a tick to send it to us for identification, so we can track where different types of ticks are most commonly found."

If you get bitten, send ticks to our [Zoonotic Disease Program](#) for identification. Information on how to [submit ticks](#) is on our website.

Although tick-borne illnesses are rare in Washington, there are cases of tick-borne relapsing fever and Lyme disease here every year. Rocky Mountain spotted fever and babesiosis are even rarer in Washington, but there are occasional cases. These illnesses often result from tick bites in states where ticks are more common, but some illnesses (including Lyme disease) are acquired in our state.

"There are some simple precautions people can take," said Dykstra. The best protection against these diseases is avoiding tick bites. Before heading outdoors:

- **Wear insect repellent** that contains DEET or permethrin. Both are effective if used properly. DEET is applied to skin, and permethrin is applied to clothing. Carefully follow product directions.
- **Wear light-colored clothing.** It's easier to spot dark-colored insects.
- **Tuck your pants into your socks and your shirt into your pants.**
- **Protect pets:** Use an approved tick preventative on your pets. Ask your veterinarian which product or method is best for your pet.

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People should protect themselves in Washington and while traveling elsewhere. Tick-borne diseases range from mild illnesses to serious infections that require hospitalization. Symptoms may include fever, headache, fatigue, muscle aches, or rash. Several tick-borne diseases can also infect dogs. [More information is available online](http://doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/Zoo/watickdiseases.htm) (doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/Zoo/watickdiseases.htm).

Ticks live in wooded, brushy, or grassy places. They feed on rodents, raccoons, deer, and other warm-blooded animals, including dogs and people. After being outdoors, check yourself, your family members, and your pets carefully for ticks. Ask someone to check your back, too. Many of us enjoy staying at cabins in the woods, which is where relapsing fever ticks can be found.

If you find a tick on yourself, carefully remove it right away. Grasp the tick with tweezers as close to the skin as possible and pull upward with a steady even pressure. Avoid crushing the tick's body. Make sure the mouthparts are removed and then thoroughly clean the bite site using soap and water, rubbing alcohol, or iodine solution.

Write down the date you found the attached tick. If you develop a fever or rash within the next several weeks, seek medical care, and tell your healthcare provider about your recent tick bite. This information, along with the species of the tick, may help your provider with your diagnosis.

A helpful [poster on avoiding tick bites](http://doh.wa.gov/materials/tick-bites) is also available for downloading and printing (here.doh.wa.gov/materials/tick-bites).

The [Department of Health website](http://www.doh.wa.gov) (www.doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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